

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIMA 06311 272310Z

61

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 SS-15

NSC-10 AID-20 RSR-01 /100 W

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P 272235Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6847

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PE

SUBJ: EL COMERCIO REAPPEARS

JOINT EMBASSY/USIS MESSAGE

REF: LIMA 5491

1. LIMA'S OLDEST, MOST PRESTIGIOUS DAILY, EL COMERCIO, REAPPEARED ON AUGUST 26, AFTER MONTH-LONG STRIKE FRAUGHT WITH POLITICAL OVERTONES.

2. STRIKE SETTLEMENT GIVES EL COMERCIO'S WORKERS, WHO ARE ORGANIZED IN INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY, THE RIGHT TO CONTRIBUTE TO A NEW DAILY OPINION COLUMN IN NEWSPAPER WHICH HAS LONG HISTORY OF ANTI-UNION BIAS. IN ADDITION, WORKERS' COMMUNITY WILL BE ABLE TO AUDIT EL COMERCIO'S ACCOUNTS AND PREVENT NEWSPAPER FROM CONTINUING TO PAD PAYROLLS WITH RELATIVES OF MIRO-QUESADA FAMILY, WHICH OWNS NEWSPAPER. MANAGEMENT IS ALSO TO DROP LAWSUITS RELATING TO MONTH-LONG OCCUPATION OF NEWSPAPER PRINTING PLANT BUT NOT SUIT DEALING WITH ILLEGAL PRINTING OF STRIKERS' VERSION EL EL COMERCIO. WAGE ISSUES ARE DEFERRED.

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PAGE 02 LIMA 06311 272310Z

3. NOTWITHSTANDING LIMITED WORKER GAINS AND POSSIBLY

SEVERE FINANCIAL LOSSES, FACT THAT EL COMERCIO SURVIVED WITHOUT TAKEOVER ITS SHARES OR MANAGEMENT CHANGES, REPRESENTS VICTORY FOR MIRO-1 QUESADA FAMILY. IT IS DEFEAT FOR RADICAL UNION DEMANDS THAT PAPER BE GIVEN TO WORKERS. IT ALSO DEFEAT FOR THOSE IN GOVERNMENT SEEKING TO MUZZLE ALL CRITICISM.

4. AS A RESULT OF STRIKE, CABINET SPLIT PUBLICLY ON MAJOR ISSUE FOR FIRST TIME SINCE 1968 (REF: A-224), WITH NAVY MINISTER VARGAS STAKING HIS PRESTIGE AND POSSIBLY CAREER ON SURVIVAL EL COMERCIO AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS WHILE TRANSPORT MINISTER MENESES SUPPORTED WORKER DEMANDS. PRESIDENT VELASCO'S CABINET REPORTEDLY DIVIDED DOWN THE MIDDLE ON QUESTION OF TAKING OVER NEWSPAPER.

5. RUMORS PERSIST THAT GOVERNMENT MAY YET ACQUIRE CONTROLLING INTEREST IN ALL PUBLICATIONS AS IT HAS IN LOCAL RADIO-TELEVISION BROADCASTING.

6. STRIKE SERVED TO CRYSTALLIZE MIDDLE CLASS RESENTMENT AGAINST GOVERNMENT. POSSIBLY SENSING PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO SILENCING EL COMERCIO AS WELL AS RUMORED MILITARY DISSATISFACTION WITH REVOLUTION THAT WAS THREATENING TO DO AWAY WITH WHAT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS REMAINS IN PERU, VELASCO GOVERNMENT HAS PROBABLY WISELY BACKED AWAY FROM MAKING EL COMERCIO MORE OF A POLITICAL ISSUE THAN IT WAS.
BARNEBEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LIMA06311
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LIMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730814/aaaaajsj.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LIMA 5491
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <13 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EL COMERCIO REAPPEARS JOINT EMBASSY/USIS MESSAGE
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005